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ABSTRACT

For the first three years of the Southeast Alternatives (SEA) project, the parents of the SEA school children were polled each year to determine their reasons for sending their children to these schools. Since the basis of the project was to include students themselves in the decision making process, it was decided that students should also be interviewed to determine how they see their role in their learning environment. The survey was designed to measure student awareness, student's role in school selection, student's view of why parents chose their school, and student's satisfaction with choices that were made. The random sample was made up of 166 students from the elementary lists of the five SEA schools. A history was drawn up on each child and an oral interview conducted. All data, data analysis, and interpretations have been included in this paper. (DEP)

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The Elementary Student Survey, 1974:

A Study in Choice-Making

June 30, 1974

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Illustrations by SEA students were kindly provided by the SEA Public Information Office

This is a SEA Level I evaluation report, prepared as part of the project-wide evaluation effort. Contact Sherrill Hooker, evaluator, for further information.

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BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON SOUTHEAST ALTERNATIVES

December, 1973

The Experimental Schools Program (ESP), a plan testing comprehensive change in education, was initiated in 1971 with the intent to bridge the gap from research and experimentation to practice.

The experimental schools concept became a reality when Congress appropriated $12 million for the fiscal year 1971 following President Nixon's message on education reform, March 30, 1970. The program was first sponsored by the United States Office of Education and now is directed by the National Institute of Education (NIE).

The Minneapolis Public School District was one of eight school districts throughout the nation that received $10,000 planning grants to prepare a proposal for a single comprehensive K-12 project. In May, 1971 three of the eight districts, Minneapolis Public Schools, Berkeley Unified School District of Berkeley, California and Franklin Pierce School District of Tacoma, Washington, were selected as experimental school sites. There are 18 experimental school sites as of 1973.

Southeast Alternatives, the name given to the Minneapolis Public Schools' Experimental School Project, was funded for five years. On June 1, 1971, a 27-month operation grant of $3,580,877 was made to the school district. A final 33-month contract for $3,036,722 was approved by the National Institute of Education (NIE) on May 22, 1973.

Major factors in the selection of southeast Minneapolis as the site for the Minneapolis program were its commitment to a comprehensive proposal, past record of responsible innovation, and plan for providing parent choice of alternative schools. The 2,200 K-12 students in the project include a racially and economically diverse urban population. Southeast Minneapolis,

bounded by factories, flour mills, freeways, multiple dwellings, residential neighborhoods, shopping areas and railroads, also houses the main campus of the University of Minnesota, Minneapolis. Stately old homes, low income apartments and expensive condominiums are all located in the area. This mixture of ages, occupations, interests, and life styles supports a diversity of views about the nature of public education which the five SEA alternative schools of parent choice reflect.

The central theme of Southeast Alterratives is to provide comprehensive change in the educational structure and programs for the better education of children. The change is accomplished by offering choices to students, teachers, and parents in the types of educational programs available, involving students, faculty and parents in educational decision-making processes and decentralizing the administrative structure of the school district to local schools.

At the elementary level four major alternative school programs are offered:

The Contemporary School at Tuttle utilizes the graded, primarily self-contained classroom structure. The basic skills of mathematics and language are developed through an individualized multi-text, multi-media approach. Students flow between their base rooms and a variety of learning centers to participate in learning activities throughout the entire school day.

The Continuous Progress primary at Pratt and the Continuous Progress intermediate at Motley allow each child to advance at his own pace without regard to grade level. Mornings are highly structured with language arts, math and social studies. Afternoons are used for two week interest groups designed and implemented by students, faculty and staff, parents and volunteers.

The Open School at Marcy offers flexible curriculum, scheduling and age grouping, with emphasis on helping children to learn to think, and to learn to make independent judgments.

The Free School (K-12) has curriculum flexibility allowing the student to pursue areas he or she wishes to develop and experience with emphasis on making the curriculum relevant to present day issues and on enhancing students' skills, knowledge and inner autonomy for acting as free people in an environment of rapid, almost radical change. The Free School is particularly committed to recognize and oppose racist, sexist and class oppression in today's world.

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At the secondary level the Free School program option is available as well as the flexible Marshall-University High School array of courses and activities. At Marshall-University High School each student with his parents' consent designs his or her educational program within a trimester system of twelve week courses. In addition to single discipline courses there are multi-disciplinary courses, independent study opportunities, and a variety of off-campus learning programs in the community.

The transitional program for grades 7-8 at Marshall-University High School has been revised to offer choices to students coming from the elementary options. An ungraded Open Classroom and graded classes are available as well as A.L.E., the Adjusted Learning Environment for students with special needs. Teachers work in teams to offer a flexible program to meet the needs of students in the transitional years.

A Teacher Center has been established to provide teachers with an opportunity to receive substantial inservice training as well as to provide an avenue for preservice experiences. An Inservice Committee made up of teachers from the schools receives proposals and acts on them, thus providing a direct role for teachers in the staff development activities. The University of Minnesota and Minneapolis Public Schools jointly operate the Teacher Center which was first initiated with federal SEA funds.

Evaluation of the SEA project is both internal and external. The Level I internal evaluation team provides day-to-day responsive formative evaluation to program decision-makers including parents, administrators, faculty, staff and students.

The Level II Evaluation team is organized by the ARIES Corporation. This external team is known as the Minneapolis Evaluation Team (MET) and is accountable directly to N.I.E. The purpose of external evaluation is to independently collect information of a sumative nature about SEA which will be of use to practicing educators who are in the process of designing, implementing or operating programs to improve education.

INTRODUCTION

One hypothesis of the Southeast Alternatives experiment is that "public education becomes more effective in terms of students and parents having options in selection of learning environment and/or in terms of educational philosophy to meet individual wants and needs." (Southeast Alternatives 1971-76 Plan) SEA parents have been polled in three parent opinion surveys during each of the first three years of the project to determine their reasons for choosing the SEA school their children attend. Because the nature of the SEA experiment was to offer the right to exercise choice of options to students as well, this year interviews of students in SEA elementary schools were planned by the internal evaluation team to discover how much of a role students themselves believe they have in choosing their learning environment. The interviews were designed to discover:

1. if students are aware that they have a choice of schools within SEA to attend;
2. what role, if any, students have in selecting the school they attend;
3. what reasons students feel they or their parents have for choosing a school; and
4. how satisfied students are with the choice their parents or they have made.

THE NATURE OF THE DATA

Because of the young ages of the students interviewed for this study, some explanation needs to be made about the nature of the data collected from their responses to interviewers' questions. Primarily, students gave concrete reflections of abstract concepts. For example, when asked what they liked about their schools, students would reply, "I like not having to sit in desks," or "I like being able to move around from class to class." Though these are concrete descriptions of actions, the evaluators tallied them in a category described as structure and philosophy of the school, since these activities were only possible because of the nature and extent of the school's alternative structure.

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Secondly, it must be noted that all responses are student perceptions of a process. Though students gave reasons why their parents chose a school for them, their parents may never have discussed the matter with them. Students may therefore have given reasons they assumed their parents had. Thus, the data within the report represents the role of SEA elementary students in the SEA choice-making process strictly as they perceive it.

DESIGN OF THE SAMPLE

Fifteen percent of Southeast Alternatives' elementary enrollment, 166 students, were interviewed for this study. This is a large sample but it was deemed necessary in order to encompass the diversity of SEA's student population. Marshall-University junior and senior high school students and secondary Free School students were not included in the study because there was neither time nor personnel to interview 15% of their large combined enrollments and, more importantly, because choice-making such as that available at the elementary-level does not operate at the secondary-level.

To obtain the interview sample, students on current elementary lists from each of five SEA schools- Tuttle Contemporary, Pratt and Motley Continuous Progress, Marcy Open and Free School - were assigned a number in alphabetical order. Numbers were then selected from a random number table in the Handbook of Probability and Statistics, Burington/May (McGraw Hill 1970). When a random number matched a student's assigned number, the student was included in the sample. Several extra students beyond 15% of the student population were chosen at each school for an alternates list.

A school history was compiled for each student in the sample using information available in his or her Minneapolis Public Schools cumulative file. The history

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included the student's sex, schools the student had attended during the three years of the project and the present school residence area in which the student lived. The age of each student was asked during his or her interview.

The breakdown of each school's student sample by age, sex, and present school residence area follows:

TUTTLE

Age and Sex N=40

	Primary		Middle		Total	
Male	9	47% / 45%	10	53% / 50%	19	100% / 48%
Female	11	52% / 55%	10	48% / 50%	21	100% / 52%
Total	20	50% / 100%	20	50% / 100%	40	100% / 100%

Residence Area N=40

Tuttle	25	52%
Other SEA	9	23%
non-SEA	6	15%

PRATT/MOTLEY

Age and Sex N=71

	Primary		Middle		Total	
Male	19	54% / 48%	16	46% / 52%	36	100% / 49%
Female	21	58% / 52%	15	42% / 48%	36	100% / 51%
Total	40	56% / 100%	31	44% / 100%	41	100% / 100%

Residence Area N=70

P/M	46	66%
Other SEA	9	13%
non-SEA	15	21%

Unknown 1

MARCY

Age and Sex N=46

	Primary		Middle		Total	
Male	13	54% / 50%	11	46% / 55%	24	100% / 52%
Female	13	59% / 50%	9	41% / 54%	22	100% / 48%
Total	26	57% / 100%	20	43% / 100%	46	100% / 100%

Residence Area N=46

Marcy	14	30%
Other SEA	19	46%
non-SEA	11	24%

FREE SCHOOL

Age and Sex N=9

	Primary	Middle	Total
Male	3 43% 75%	4 57% 80%	7 100% 78%
Female	1 50% 25%	1 50% 20%	2 100% 22%
Total	4 44% 100%	5 56% 100%	9 100% 100%

Residence Area N=9

	(No residence area)	
Free School		
Other SEA	6	67%
non-SEA	3	33%

DESIGN OF THE INTERVIEW FORM

Oral interviews were used to gather data for this study because it was felt elementary students, particularly primary children, might not have either the skills or patience to read or respond at length to a written interview form. Questions pertaining to the four areas of student choice stated in the introduction -- awareness of choice, involvement in choice-making, reasons for choice, and satisfaction with choice--were pretested with students at Tuttle Contemporary School and the Free School and were subsequently revised. The final interview questions used for the study are included in their interview form at the end of this report for referral during the following discussion of each interview question and the kinds of information the question was formulated to elicit.

Question #1 asked what schools the student had attended in the past in order to verify the student's school history found in his or her Minneapolis Public Schools cumulative file. This question was also designed to help students begin to talk comfortably about themselves with the interviewer. Several probe questions were also included for this purpose (1a. through 1c.) in case the student was unresponsive or unsure of his or her reply.

Question #2 determined the role the student played in choosing his or her school. It asked if the student, someone he or she lived with, or a combination of both chose the SEA school the student attended. The phrase "someone you

live with" was used instead of "parents" to include child/adult relationships, other than a child/parent relationship, which could be found in various living situations such as communes, foster homes, or residence with a relative other than a parent.

Question #3 determined the reasons the choice-maker(s) mentioned in the response to question #2 selected the school they did for the student. Both questions #2 and #3 were asked for each SEA school a student had attended during the three years of the project. However, to be consistent the evaluators decided that they should tabulate information only pertaining to the most recent choice of school made by each student.

Questions #4 and #5 were used to determine why a child had returned to an SEA school s/he had previously attended sometime within the last three years. This question was designed to discover if students attended the same school for different reasons at different points in time. However, this data was not used since so few students interviewed had had this experience.

Responses to questions #6 and #7 indicated whether students realized they had a choice of school to attend and whether they understood that it was the nature of the Southeast Alternatives experiment that made choice of school available. When a students responses to #6 and #7 were unclear, his or her awareness of choice and knowledge of SEA were often determined from a combination of responses to other interview questions, particulary questions #3 and #10.

Questions #8, #9, and #10 determined students' satisfaction with their schools by asking what they liked or disliked about their school, and if they wished to attend another school and why.

CONDUCTING THE INTERVIEW

Since the pretest interviews were conducted on the average in less than ten minutes, the evaluators decided it was not necessary to tape record the interviews. Instead, forms were printed listing the interview questions, each followed by enough space for the interviewer to record the child's response.

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One form was used for each child. This method was successful, since the students' responses were rarely too long or too involved for the interviewer to record them completely.

In the more structured schools, interviewing went quickly since children in the sample were taken from their classrooms and interviewed in the hall. In less structured schools, interviewing was slower since much time was spent locating children in various parts of the building. When a student could not be located or had been absent for several days during the course of the interviewing at a particular school, another child from the alternates list was interviewed in his or her place.

KEY TO THE DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Translating free responses of elementary students into data for analysis is a difficult task. The children occasionally responded with ambiguous, unique, or lively answers that were difficult to categorize. Consequently, some explanation of how the evaluators did categorize the responses is necessary to understand the data analysis and interpretation. The Tables referred to appear in the text following this section:

- Tables 1 & 2: Students were coded as "aware" of having a choice of schools if they said "yes" they could attend another SEA school and/or if they mentioned at least one other SEA school they could attend. Students were coded as "not aware" if they said they could not go to another school (even if their parents would let them) and/or did not mention another SEA school they could attend.

- Tables 3 & 4: Self-explanatory

- Tables 5 & 6: Students occasionally offered more than a single reason for why they or their parents chose their school, and all reasons were coded. The categories of reasons were developed after all interviews had been conducted and studied. Examples of categories are as follows:

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a. Programs and Structure --"It was open. . .don't have to sit in desks"; "You could decide more of what you want to do"; "Mom and dad liked it 'cause it wasn't as open as _____"; "They don't do much work at the other schools"; "_____had good programs."

b. "Good school" or "learn more"--"Mom wanted me to learn"; "Would be good for me"; "It's a nice school"; "You learn more here"; "Daddy liked it here."

c. Peers--"'Cause my friend was here"; "Two of my friends went here"; "Kids here aren't rough with me"; "There's no fighting here"; "Most other kids go here."

d. Movement Away From Former School--"I just didn't like____ (former school)"; "Anything would be better than _____(former school)"; "I wanted to try another school"; "____(former school) was the same every day."

e. Location--"It's close to my house"; "near home."

f. Brothers/Sisters Going There--"Because my brother goes here"; "My older sister's here."

g. Staff--"Mom liked the teachers here"; "Mom said Mrs._____ (teacher) would take good care of me"; "Teachers are nice here".

- Table 7: Self-explanatory

- Table 8: A response was coded "no awareness" of SEA if the student said they knew nothing about SEA, what it is, what it means, etc. A response was coded "office, buses, money, materials for the school" if the student responded with an answer of that nature. A response was coded "experiment/alternatives" if the student indicated that the idea of SEA was to provide choices of schools for students, with each school having a different structure or program.

- Table 9: A response was coded "yes" to "knowledge of SEA" if the student indicated either of the two responses described above as "office, buses, money, materials" or "experiment/alternatives," since, in reality, SEA is an organization with an office that supplied materials, etc., as well as a program of educational alternatives.

- Tables 10-13: When more than one "like" or "dislike" was given, all responses were coded. Examples of categories are as follows:

a. Philosophy/Structure--"I like how you can choose what you want to do"; "Everybody can be doing something different"; "Learn more 'cause it isn't an open school"; "Too strict about recess"; "Don't like some of the rules"; "Like changing teachers."

b. Programs, Curriculum, Materials, Activities--"I like Hammer Hall and pottery"; "Don't like doing math"; "Like the centers"; "Like gym"; "Like games"; "Like reading, pottery, drawing pictures, math, game day, and gym."

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c. Staff--"Like the teachers"; "Don't like that there are hardly any aides"; "I like some teacher"; "Don't like some teachers"; "nice aides."

d. Peers--"I like the kids"; "Some of the kids are mean"; "I have friends to play with."

e. Physical Plant--"Like the playground"; "Has a dinky gym."

- Table 14: Self-explanatory

*Note: Occasionally a response was not coded if the response was the only one given of that nature or if the response was too ambiguous to code. This was done to simplify presentation of the data.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

One of the major questions to be answered by the elementary student survey was whether or not students are aware they have a choice of schools to attend. Results on page 18 show that 82% of students are aware that they have choices, while 18% are not aware.

Table 1 shows that middle students are somewhat more aware that they have choices than are primary students.

Table 1
Awareness of Choice
By Age Level (N=155)

	Aware	Not Aware	Total
Primary	64 (78%) (50%)	18 (22%) (64%)	82 (100%) (53%)
Middle	63 (86%) (50%)	10 (14%) (36%)	73 (100%) (47%)
Total	127 (82%) (100%)	28 (18%) (100%)	155 (100%) (100%)

(In each cell, row percentages are shown above column percentages)

Table 2 shows that there are slight differences among schools in students' awareness of options (which may be an artifact of how questions were asked by different interviewers).

Table 2
School Program
By Awareness of Choice (N=155)

	Tuttle	Pratt/ Motley	Marcy	Free School
Aware	36 (95%)	44 (70%)	39 (87%)	8 (89%)
Not Aware	2 (5%)	19 (30%)	6 (13%)	1 (11%)
Total	38 (100%)	63 (100%)	45 (100%)	9 (100%)

(Column percentages are shown)

A second important question concerns how much of an influence the student perceives that s/he had in choosing the school s/he attends. Results on page 18 show that 26% of students say that they chose their school, 21% say that they and their parent(s) together chose, 52% say their parents chose, and 1% say it was a school recommendation that they attend that school.

Table 3 shows that middle students perceive themselves as having slightly more influence in making the decision than do primary students.

Table 3
Student's Role in Choice-Making
By Age (N=161)

	Student Chose	Parent(s) & Student Chose	Parent(s) Chose	School Recommendation	Total
Primary	21 (24%) (50%)	15 (17%) (44%)	50 (59%) (60%)	0 - -	86 (100%) (53%)
Middle	21 (28%) (50%)	19 (25%) (56%)	34 (45%) (40%)	1 (2%) (100%)	75 (100%) (47%)
Total	42 (26%) (100%)	34 (21%) (100%)	84 (52%) (100%)	1 (1%) (100%)	161 (100%) (100%)

(In each cell, row percentages are shown above column percentages)

Table 4 shows that there are differences among schools in the role the student perceives him/herself to play in the decision of what school to attend.

Table 4
School Program
By Student's Role in Choice-Making (N=161)

	Tuttle	Pratt/ Motley	Marcy	Free School
Parent(s) Chose	32 (80%)	35 (53%)	15 (33%)	3 (33%)
Student Chose	4 (10%)	10 (15%)	24 (52%)	4 (45%)
Parent(s) & Student Chose	4 (10%)	21 (32%)	6 (13%)	2 (22%)
School Recommendation	0 -	0 -	1 (2%)	0 -
Total	40 (100%)	66 (100%)	46 (100%)	9 (100%)

(Column percentages are shown)

When students were asked the reasons why the decision-maker chose the school that they did, several categories of reasons were offered. Results on page 18 show that "school programs and structure" are 30% of the reasons offered; that the school is a "good school" or you can "learn more there" are 20% of the reasons; "relationships with other kids" are 16% of the reasons; "desires to leave a former school" are 13% of the reasons; "location of the school" are 10% of the reasons: "brothers/sisters already going there" are 7% of the reasons; and "the staff" are 4% of the reasons.

Table 5 shows that there are some differences between primary and middle students in the reasons given for choice of school. There are also differences in reason for choice depending on the school the student attends, as shown in Table 6.

Table 6
School Program
By Reasons for Choice of School
(Total Reasons=170)

	Tuttle	Pratt/ Motley	Marcy	Free School
Programs & Structure	14 (26%)	18 (28%)	19 (40%)	1 (17%)
"Good School" or "Learn More"	14 (26%)	11 (17%)	10 (21%)	0 -
Peers	11 (20%)	9 (14%)	3 (6%)	0 -
Movement Away from Former School	3 (6%)	8 (13%)	7 (15%)	4 (66%)
Location	7 (6%)	10 (16%)	1 (2%)	0 -
Brothers/sisters Going There	3 (6%)	4 (6%)	4 (9%)	1 (17%)
Staff	2 (3%)	3 (6%)	3 (7%)	0 -
Total	54 (100%)	63 (100%)	47 (100%)	6 (100%)

(Column percentages are shown)

Table 5
Age
By Reasons for Choice of School
(Total Reasons=170)

	Primary	Middle
Programs & Structure	16 (23%)	36 (37%)
"Good School" or "Learn More"	19 (27%)	16 (16%)
Peers	10 (14%)	13 (13%)
Movement Away from Former School	11 (15%)	11 (11%)
Location	4 (6%)	14 (14%)
Brothers/sisters Going There	6 (8%)	6 (6%)
Staff	5 (7%)	3 (3%)
Total	71 (100%)	99 (100%)

(Column percentages are shown)

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Finally, many students, when asked what the reasons were for attending their school, said they did not know or were simply silent.

Table 7 shows that students are less likely to know why they are attending their school if their parents chose the school than if they chose their school.

Table 7
Student's Role in Choice-Making
By No Reason Given for Why They're Attending Their School
(N=40)

	Student Chose	Parent(s) & Student Chose	Parent(s) Chose	School Recommendation	Total
Uncertain Or No Reason Given	7 (18%)	5 (12%)	27 (68%)	1 (2%)	40 (100%)

(Row percentages are shown)

Of further interest was whether or not students know what "SEA" or Southeast Alternatives" is, and whether knowing something about SEA is connected to their being aware that they have a choice of schools.

Table 8 shows that 27% of students are aware of the concept of SEA as an experiment in alternative education; 15% think SEA is an office, or that it supplies money, materials, and buses; and 58% have no awareness of what SEA is. Table 8 also shows that middle students have greater awareness of SEA than do primary students.

Table 8
Age
By Awareness of SEA
(N=156)

	Primary	Middle	Total
No Awareness	69 (77%) (84%)	21 (23%) (28%)	90 (100%) (58%)
Office, Busses, Money, Materials	9 (37%) (11%)	15 (63%) (20%)	24 (100%) (15%)
Experiment/ Alternatives	4 (9%) (5%)	38 (91%) (52%)	(100%) (27%)
Total	82 (52%) (100%)	74 (48%) (100%)	156 (100%) (100%)

(In each cell, row percentages are shown above column percentages)

Table 9 (on following page) shows that students who have some awareness of what SEA is tend to be more aware that they have a choice of schools to attend than do students who have no awareness of SEA. However, it is interesting that many students who are aware that they have a choice of schools do not know what SEA is, suggesting that many students do not connect the SEA concept or terminology with the concrete schools they know they can attend.

Table 9
Knowledge of SEA
By Awareness of Choice Being Available
(N=138)

Awareness of Choice Being Available		Yes	No	Total
	Yes	61 (53%) (95%)	55 (47%) (74%)	116 (100%) (84%)
	No	3 (14%) (5%)	19 (86%) (26%)	138 (100%) (100%)
	Total	64 (46%) (100%)	74 (54%) (100%)	138 (100%) (100%)

(In each cell, row percentages are shown above column percentages)

Finally, the survey investigated how satisfied each student is with the school s/he attends. As shown on page 18 , when students were asked what they liked about their school, they most frequently mentioned programs, curriculum, materials, activities (42%), followed by philosophy and structure (21%), staff (19%), peers (12%), and physical plant (6%). When asked what they dislike about their school, students again most frequently mentioned programs, curriculum, materials, activities (34%), followed by peers (31%), staff (20%), philosophy and structure (13%), and physical plant (2%). The reason for programs, curriculum, materials, and activities being both the most liked and the most disliked aspect of the school is that this category encompasses many of the concrete features of school. Thus many students, for example, responded that they liked one activity while disliking another.

Tables 10 and 11 (on following page) show that there are only slight differences between age groups in their likes and dislikes of a school.

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Table 10
Age
By "Likes" of School
(Total responses=254)

	Primary	Middle
Philosophy/Structure	21 (17%)	32 (25%)
Program-Curriculum Materials-Activities	59 (47%)	48 (37%)
Staff	22 (18%)	25 (19%)
Peers	16 (13%)	16 (13%)
Physical plant	7 (5%)	8 (6%)
Total	125 (100%)	129 (100%)

(Column percentages are shown)

Table 11
Age
By "Dislikes" of School
(Total responses=109)

	Primary	Middle
Philosophy/Structure	8 (15%)	6 (11%)
Program-Curriculum Materials-Activities	17 (31%)	20 (37%)
Staff	12 (22%)	10 (19%)
Peers	18 (32%)	16 (30%)
Physical plant	0 -	2 (3%)
Total	55 (100%)	54 (100%)

(Column percentages are shown)

Table 12
School Program
By "Likes" of School
(Total Responses=254)

	Tuttle	Pratt/ Motley	Marcy	Free School
Philosophy/Structure	1 (2%)	33 (26%)	18 (29%)	1 (14%)
Program-Curriculum Materials-Activities	34 (64%)	49 (37%)	20 (32%)	4 (57%)
Staff	11 (21%)	25 (19%)	9 (14%)	2 (29%)
Peers	6 (11%)	16 (12%)	10 (16%)	0 -
Physical plant	1 (2%)	8 (6%)	6 (9%)	0 -
Total	53 (100%)	131 (100%)	63 (100%)	7 (100%)

(Column percentages are shown)

Tables 12 and 13 show, however, a large difference between likes and dislikes of school depending on the school the student attends.

Table 13
School Program
By "Dislikes" of School
(Total Responses=109)

	Tuttle	Pratt/ Motley	Marcy	Free School
Philosophy/Structure	3 (19%)	8 (16%)	2 (6%)	1 (12%)
Program-Curriculum Materials-Activities	8 (50%)	16 (32%)	11 (31%)	2 (26%)
Staff	3 (19%)	9 (18%)	9 (26%)	1 (12%)
Peers	2 (12%)	17 (34%)	11 (31%)	4 (50%)
Physical plant	0 -	0 -	2 (6%)	0 -
Total	16 (100%)	50 (100%)	35 (100%)	8 (100%)

(Column percentages are shown)

Satisfaction with school was also examined by asking students if they would go to a different school if they could. Results on page 18 show that 20% of students said they would like to attend a different school, while 73% said they would not like to change schools, and 7% said maybe, or they were not sure.

Table 14 shows that there are some differences in response to this question depending on the school the student attends.

Table 14
School Program
By Want To Attend A Different School
(N=166)

	Tuttle	Pratt/ Motley	Marcy	Free School	Total
No	34 (28%) (85%)	50 (41%) (70%)	30 (25%) (65%)	7 (6%) (78%)	121 (100%) (73%)
Yes	5 (15%) (13%)	19 (56%) (27%)	9 (26%) (20%)	1 (3%) (11%)	11 (100%) (20%)
"Maybe" or Not Sure	1 (9%) (2%)	2 (18%) (3%)	7 (64%) (15%)	1 (9%) (11%)	11 (100%) (7%)
Total	40 (24%) (100%)	71 (43%) (100%)	46 (28%) (100%)	9 (5%) (100%)	166 (100%) (100%)

(In each cell, row percentages are shown above column percentages)

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COMPARISON OF PARENT SURVEY AND STUDENT INTERVIEW RESPONSES ON CHOICE-MAKING

Some of the questions students were asked about school choice in the student interviews conducted for this study are similar to questions parents were asked on parent surveys during the last three years about their role in and reasons for choosing SEA schools for their children. The evaluators thought it might be of interest to compare student and parent perceptions of the choice-making process. The reader must bear in mind, however, that parent and student responses are from different years. Parent responses are from questions asked on the 1972 and 1973 parent surveys, while all data on student attitudes is from the student interviews conducted in 1974.

The question, "What reason was most important in choosing your (child's) school," was asked of all parents in the 1972 and 1973 parent surveys and of all students in the 1974 student interviews. In comparing parent and student responses, one must realize that parents were given a limited choice of responses to this question, while students were asked this question in an open-ended manner - that is, they were free to respond with any reply they wished. Thus, students gave more diverse reasons for choosing a school than parents were able to. Since only those student reasons that correspond with reasons given on the parent surveys are tallied here, column percentages do not add up to 100%.

PARENT AND STUDENT REASONS FOR CHOICE OF SCHOOL

Table 15

Reasons given for choice	Parent Surveys n=122 '72	Parent Surveys n=670 '73	Student Interviews n=157 '74
school program	59%	74%	30%
Location of school	21.3%	12%	11%
school staff	5%	3%	4%
student peers	-	3%	14%

NOTE: Data for parent responses in 1972 and 1973 refers only to parents of elementary students at Marcy, Pratt, Motley,

and Tuttle. To be consistent, responses for students in 1974 are only from those four schools, though data was also available for elementary Free Schools students.

As noted in Table 15, peers seemed to influence student choice more than parents felt it did. This is understandable, since a student's relation to his or her peers and a student's treatment by school peers can greatly influence his or her satisfaction with a school experience. A possible explanation for the fact that "school program" seemed to influence student choice much less than parent choice could be related to the differing forms of the parent survey and student interview. Two other major reasons that students gave for choosing a school that are related in nature to the concept of the reason "school program" were were "I felt it was a good school" and "I wished to move away from a former school. Since these reasons given by students were not available as choices on the parent surveys, parents who in reality chose a school for these other reasons might have indicated their reason on the parent survey as "school program" instead.

In the 1972 parent survey, parents were asked who had the most important role in choosing the school their oldest child attended. In the 1974 student interviews, students were asked who chose the school for them which they attended. A comparison of parent and student responses on this issue follows.

WHO MADE CHOICE OF SCHOOL FOR STUDENT

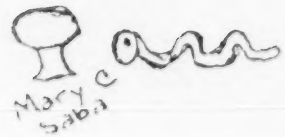
Table 16

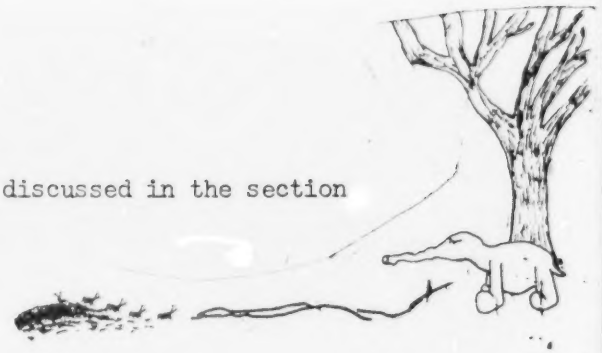
who chose	Parent Surveys n=122 '72	Student Interviews n=152 '74
child	16%	25%
parent	76%	54%
other	2%	1%
child and parent		20%

NOTE: The response "child and parent made choice" was not offered in the 1972 parent survey. Since responses of parents of elementary Free School students were not included in the 1972 Parent Survey

data for this question, elementary Free School student responses from the 1974 student interviews were not included either in the student interview column.

From comparisons of data in Table 15 and 16 it seems that in different years students and parents had slightly different perceptions of who chose the school a student attended and the reasons they did so.





by Stephen Peabody

CONCLUSIONS

The following conclusions are presented and discussed in the section entitled, "Data Analysis and Interpretation". They are restated here in a simplified form for the teacer's convenience. The conclusions are grouped by the four categories or goals of the study mentioned in the introduction to the report on page 1.

1. Are students aware that they have a choice of schools within SEA to attend?

*Aware	Not Aware
82%	18%

2. What role, if any, do students have in selecting the school they attend?

*Student Chose	Parent(s) & Student Chose	Parent(s) Chose	School Recommendation
26%	21%	52%	1%

3. What reasons do students feel they or their parents have for choosing a school?

*Program & Structure	"Good School" "learn More"	Relationships With Other Students	Desire to Leave Former School	Location	Brother/Sisters Going There	Staff
30%	20%	16%	13%	10%	7%	4%

4. How satisfied are students with the choice they or their parents have made? Three separate interview items illuminate student level of satisfaction:

   a) What do students say they like about their school?

*Philosophy & Structure	Programs, Curriculum Materials, Activities	Staff	Peers	Physical Plant
21%	42%	19%	12%	6%

   b) What do students say they dislike about their school?

*Philosophy & Structure	Programs, Curriculum, Materials, Activities	Staff	Peers	Physical Plant
13%	34%	20%	31%	2%

   c) How many students say they would like to attend a different school?

*Would like to Attend Different School	Would Not like to Attend Different School	Maybe or Not Sure
20%	73%	7%

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*For an explanation of these categories, see pp. 6 - 8.

Appendix A

The Interview Questions

Name_____

Age_____ Sex_____

Residence Area_____

School(s) Attended: 1971-72 _____

1972-73_____

1973-74_____

School now attending_____

Who made choice and why

1. Did you ever go to another school?

   a. How many schools have you gone to besides _____(current school)?

   b. What schools did you go to?

   c. What grade (or how old) were you in when you were at _____ (each school named)?

(Ask the following two questions for each school named since 1971-72)

2. When you went to _____in _____grade (or state age), did you choose to go there or did someone who you live with, or did all of you?

3. What did _____(whomever made decision) know about _____school that made you/them decide you should go to school there? (If someone told them about it, what did _____say)? (Do you have brothers or sisters? What school do they go to? What have they told you about their school?)

(Ask the following two questions if child has switched schools and then returned to original school)

4. When you returned to _____school, did you decide to do that or did _____(adult(s) child lives with)?

5. How come _____decided you should go back to _____?

Awareness of choice

6. What do you think SEA means?
   If "I don't know": a) Have you ever heard of SEA before?
   b) What did you hear?
   c) Who did you hear talking about it?
   d) What did they say?

7. Do you think SEA means you can go to another school if you want to?

Satisfaction with current choice

8. Is there anything you like about your school?

9. Is there anything you don't like about your school?

10. Would you go to a different school if you could?
   a) What school would you go to if you could?
   b) What do you think you'd like about _____school?
   c) Did you ever tell anyone you wanted to go to _____school?
   (If "no" - no further questions)
   d) If "yes") - what did _____say when you told them you wanted to go to _____school?

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